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ABSTRACT

Designed for teachers and other adults who work with ycung children, this manual provides guidelines for designing creative house corner activities. The first chapter examines outcomes inherent in dramatic play. Chapter Two presents practical suggestions for arranging the area and selecting and displaying materials which will inspire dramatic play. Props which are appropriate for various cultural groups are listed. Sara Smilansky's six criteria for socio-dramatic play are discussed in Chapter Three as a framework for observing and assessing children's development in play. The teacher's role in teaching skills and expanding play themes is examined in Chapter Four. Specific suggestions for expanding to new themes in socio-dramatic play are presented in the last chapter. An annotated bibliography cf articles and books cn the house corner is included in the appendix. (Author/MP)

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HOUSE CORNER

A CREATIVE CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

PS 01 1830

Creative Associates, Inc.

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We especially want to thank all the participants in the workshops who freely shared their concerns and experiences in working with young children.

HOUSE CORNER

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FOREWORD

This Early Childhood Curriculum Manual is one of four manuals based on approaches developed during "Celebration in Learning '76" (CIL), a research and demonstration program funded by the Office of Child Development (DHEW) in cooperation with the Washington, D.C. Bicentennial Commission. A primary objective of CIL was to design and pilot test in-service training workshops for early childhood personnel with a special emphasis on the utilization of space and materials in the classroom. The workshops showed how room arrangement can affect children's behavior and offered practical ideas for organizing and using materials with young children. The training offered in these workshops served to help teachers identify and learn ways to extend the basic social and cognitive skills children can gain by exploring materials and participating in activities associated with six classroom areas: Blocks, Table Toys, Art, House Corner, Books, Clay and Play Dough.

Following these workshops, the CIL staff developed four Early Childhood Curriculum Manuals: Blocks, Table Toys, Art and House Corner. The manuals, as completed and revised by the staff of Creative Associates in 1979, are based on the content presented in the workshops. They are intended to provide specific guidance in using materials and arranging the areas where materials are used. Theoretical information is presented in the context of practical approaches which teachers can use to foster intellectual, socio/emotional and physical development of children.

A Trainer's Guide is available for each of the manuals. The guides present a workshop approach and philosophy and offer suggestions on presenting each section of the Curriculum Manual in a workshop setting.

Two of the manuals, Bloques and Artes, are available in Spanish. These manuals cover the same subject areas as their English counterparts but the specific content is oriented to the learning styles and special interests of Spanish speaking children.

A companion Annotated Bibliography entitled Resource Materials for the Creative Curriculum has also been produced by the project. The bibliography offers a comprehensive review of articles and books focusing on the House Corner, Art, Blocks, Table Toys, Water, Sand, Books and Clay/Play Dough. A special feature of the bibliography is the inclusion of a set of criteria to assist teachers and parents in evaluating the racial and ethnic images projected in children's books.

INTRODUCTION

House Corner, A Creative Curriculum, is designed for adults who work with young children and who wish to expand and enrich the activities which take place in the House Corner. The first chapter examines the important learnings which are inherent in dramatic play. Chapter II presents practical suggestions for arranging the area, selecting and displaying materials which will inspire dramatic play. Props which are appropriate for various cultural groups are listed. Sara Smilansky's six criteria for socio-dramatic play are discussed in Chapter III as a framework for observing and assessing children's development in play. The teacher's role in teaching skills and expanding play themes is examined in Chapter IV. Specific suggestions for expanding to new themes in socio-dramatic play are presented in the last chapter. An Annotated Bibliography of articles and books on the House Corner is included in the Appendix for those who wish to read more extensively on this topic.

The House Corner Curriculum Manual is intended to serve a variety of needs. For the individual reader, including teachers and parents, the Manual offers a chapter-by-chapter sequence of topics which may be read as a whole or selectively depending on the needs and interests of the reader. For center directors and others involved in training teachers and parents, the topics covered in the Manual can serve as the subject matter for a workshop or a series of workshops. A Trainer's Guide giving specific suggestions for presenting each topic in a workshop setting is also available from Creative Associates.

The content of this Manual is particularly appropriate for teachers who are working towards certification through the Child Development Associate Consortium (CDAC). The Manual identifies the CDA Competencies related to the use of materials in early childhood classrooms and then shows in detail how these competencies apply in working with children in the House Corner. The list of competencies can be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER I

THE HOUSE CORNER -- A SETTING FOR LEARNING AND GROWTH

Topics in this chapter:

I-1. Why have a House Corner?

I-2. Social development.

I-3. Intellectual development.

I-4. Emotional development.

Goals for this chapter:

1. to consider the importance of the House Corner.

2. to recognize the ways in which children develop socially, intellectually and emotionally through dramatic play.

I-1. Why have a House Corner?

Most early childhood classrooms have a "House Corner" or some area for "dress-up" and dramatic play with familiar real life or make-believe themes. When educators in England looked at the needs of children through age eight, the House Corner was the one area they recommended be provided in all classrooms.

Why is the House Corner so important and valuable?

There are at least four basic reasons. The House Corner gives young children a place to:

- interact with other children in social situations
- experiment with people's roles (like parent, doctor, bus driver) and work on understanding what people do
- act out emotional needs
- use their imagination for fantasy play.

Let's look at each of these in turn under the headings of social, intellectual and emotional development.

I-2. Social development.

The House Corner can foster social development in two ways. First of all, it is one of the places young children learn to play together, to share, to take turns. Very young children (two-year-olds) often do not play with each other even when they are physically close together; but, as the children grow in age and experience, interactive behavior in the House Corner usually increases. In Chapter III we will discuss in more detail the typical development of social play during the early childhood years.

Second, by taking on a role and interacting with other children in a common play theme, children show their perceptions of how people act towards each other. When children play at being "mommy," "daddy," "baby," and so on, part of what they are doing is acting out what they have seen and how they perceive social relationships.

The House Corner is a place where children can "try out" a variety of roles. What roles have you seen children playing in the House Corner? Teachers have mentioned:

- mother
- father
- baby
- big brother
- big sister
- dog
- monster
- bus driver
- doctor
- nurse
- princess
- bride
- police officer
- fire fighter

I-3. Intellectual development.

Play and imitation are tools children use to put together the information they have gathered and experiences they have had in life.

Jean Piaget is a Swiss psychologist who has spent many years watching what children do and observing how children learn to think. Two of the important ideas that have come out of Piaget's studies are that:

- young children learn by being physically involved. By playing at being a fire fighter over and over again, the child better understands the different aspects of this job.

- in the development of intellectual skills the child progresses from using real objects to increasingly abstract symbols. Dramatic play is one important way children learn to handle symbols. When a child can pick up a wooden block and announce that it is a telephone, that child is engaging in symbolic play. If a child, by putting on a hat, can pretend to be a train engineer that child is learning symbolic representation. In this way, dramatic play helps the child to develop the ability to use other symbols like words, pictures and numbers -- which is important for success in schoolwork.

I-4. Emotional development.

The House Corner can also give children the chance to work through emotionally charged experiences.

Sometimes these are very happy occasions that have meant a great deal to the child personally -- going to the airport to meet grandparents, a trip to the zoo, having a birthday party. The experience was so important that the child wants to relive it and so recreates it in the House Corner.

If the child chooses the same theme for several days, it may be simply because the experience was so much fun, it is enjoyable to repeat it. Another reason for playing the same scenario over and over may be that repetition helps to fix the event firmly in the child's memory. It's easier to remember something you've done several times.

Children also sometimes use the House Corner to play out situations that scare them. They play "doctor giving injections" for example. Children who have had a particularly upsetting experience -- seeing an accident, being in an ambulance, attending a funeral -- often repeat the episode in their House Corner play for many days. A carefully documented example of this is reported in Play (NAEYC, 1971). An entire center of 3, 4 and 5 year olds happened to witness an accident in which a man fell from a considerable height suffering severe injury. The children saw him treated and then taken away in an ambulance. Play centering on this theme predominated in the House Corner for many months, particularly with the older children whose level of play was most advanced. In this situation, repetitive play helped the children to work through the emotions aroused by the experience so that gradually the situation seemed less frightening. Adults often find that if something upsetting has happened to them they need to talk about it over and over. Young children conquer their fears and absorb their traumas by play acting. The House Corner is helpful to children because the child creates and therefore controls the situation.

It is not only traumatic experiences that cause anxiety in young children and make them feel small and powerless. Children live in a world of adults and sometimes they need to feel powerful and in control themselves. Do you ever see children in the House Corner playing the very role they are afraid of: a monster, the parent who leaves the child, or a punative parent? Perhaps frightening situations are easier to deal with after children have experienced being on the other side and in control of the situation.

Child psychologists have found that at around the ages of three to six, imagination and fantasy play are at a peak. Children distort reality for their own purposes. They stalk imaginary tigers, or they tame them, or they become them. These are all healthy ways for children to overcome their fears, whether the tigers represent animals in the real world, "roaring" parents, or aggressive playmates. Some children make up imaginary friends who are responsible for their misbehavior. That way the "real" child can always be good. This too is a healthy step - one stage in the growth of the child's conscience. (Selma Fraiberg in her book, The Magic Years, gives beautiful examples of children's fantasies and their role in healthy mental development. See especially pages 16-23 and 141-145.)

Imaginative play also stretches a child's inner creative processes. In one study, children skillful in dramatic play scored higher than other children on tests of creativity. (Penelope Griffing, "Socio-Dramatic Play Among Young Black Children", Theory Into Practice, 13, October 1974, pp. 257 - 265.) When we support children in their fantasy play, we are helping them to build on their own interests and curiosity, to feel confident about their own thoughts, to be resourceful, and to come up with new ideas.

The House Corner is one of the best places for children to use their imagination. The value of the House Corner is that it lets children play together, try out different roles, create and control situations that they have experienced or that scare them, and develop their own creativity. But a lot of what happens in a House Corner depends on how one sets up the physical environment and the props one makes available. That is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

ARRANGING THE SPACE AND MATERIALS

Topics in this chapter:

II-1. Setting up a House Corner.

II-2. Choosing and displaying materials.

Goals for this chapter:

1. to learn ways of organizing space and furniture to support children's learning and growth.

2. to explore practical ideas for setting up a "homelike" area.

3. to consider how the needs and backgrounds of the children influence the selection of materials.

4. to learn ways of displaying materials which support involvement.

II-1. Setting up a House Corner.

Teachers are often confronted with behavior they would like to discourage. Teachers can become frustrated when the children in their classrooms are:

- racing around the room
- flitting in and out of an area
- easily distracted
- not able to maintain interest in anything for very long
- fighting over props, clothes -- not sharing
- arguing over who will play which role
- acting out -- being destructive with materials
- acting wild -- playing Batman, Bionic Woman and other aggressive characters
- resistant to clean-up.

One strategy for minimizing these problems is room arrangement. How a room is set up has a lot to do with how people behave. Here are some room arrangement ideas to consider:

(A) Activity areas should be separate and distinct.

A person walking into the room for the first time should be able to see immediately where the House Corner is, where block play takes place, and so on.

If the organization of the room is confusing to adults, it is probably also confusing to children. A room that has clearly defined areas becomes a world that "makes sense." Children feel more secure in a room where they know what to do and where to do it. They are more likely to become involved in purposeful play in a room with separate, distinct and clearly defined activity areas (House Corner, Block Area, Art Area, Table Toys Area, etc.).

Also, when each activity has a definite and separate place, materials will be more likely to stay in the area where they belong. This makes clean-up a much easier job.

(B) Activity areas should be enclosed -- not open to the whole room. In the House Corner this is usually fairly easy to do because the furniture is moveable. Instead of lining everything up against the wall, you can set it perpendicular or even out in the room with the front of the furniture facing the walls. You can use the back of another shelf to set the boundary between the House Corner and the area next to it.

Enclosed areas tend to restrain children from racing around because they can only go so far before running into a barrier. Sometimes children who tend to act out will calm down in enclosed activity areas because the smaller spaces seem cozier, giving children a sense of security.

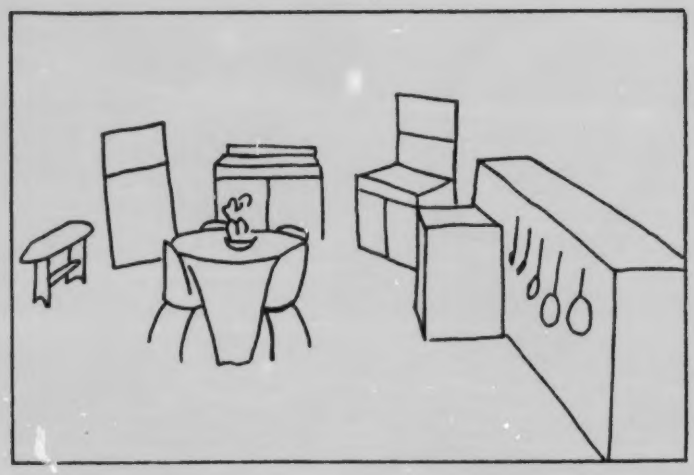
A large open space makes it difficult for some children to choose an activity. They flit from one place to another because they see so much at one time. Shelves which divide areas block out distractions; and thus, children tend to stay longer where they are playing.

(C) The House Corner should be near other "noisy" areas.

A good place to put the House Corner is next to the Block Area both because block building is also noisy and because blocks are often used for dramatic play. As children get into more involved play situations, they may begin to interact with children in the next area. If possible, the House Corner should not be adjacent to the Table Toys Area or the Book Area where you want children to be able to concentrate in quiet.

(D) The House Corner should seem "homelike," cozy, warm.

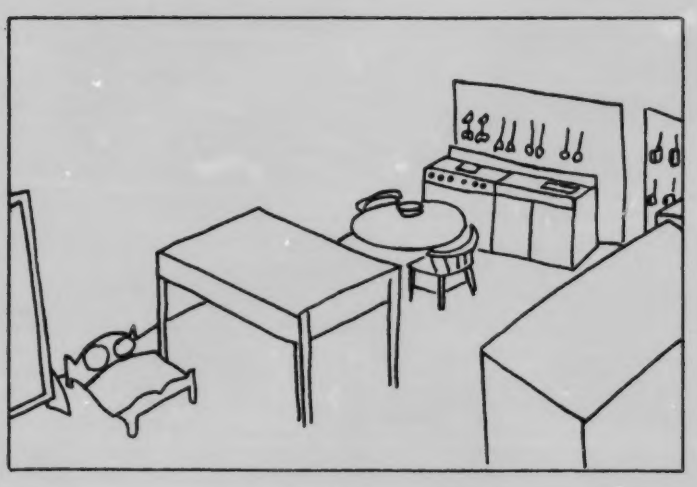
There are a lot of themes for socio-dramatic play that children can and should be involved in (doctor's office, shoestore, trips to the moon, just to name a few possibilities), but young children begin dramatic play with the themes that are most familiar to them -- playing out family relationships and house centered activities.



In fact, in one experiement when the teacher took away the House Corner, she found that within three days children were making their own informal "home" arrangements: "The large hollow blocks were being set up as beds . . . casual house-keeping arrangements were popping up under tables, and breakfast was being served at the sand table." (Vivian Paley, "Is the Doll Corner a Sexist Institution" School Review, August, 1973, 569-576.) These children needed to play house.

Ways of expanding themes in the House Corner are the subject of the last chapter of this book. For now we will limit ourselves to setting up a homelike environment.

Just as each family arranges its home differently, every early childhood teacher will set up a unique House Corner. You might like to consider these suggestions:



- If you have doll beds as well as kitchen furniture, you could divide the House Corner into two "rooms": a bedroom and a kitchen area. The dress up clothes and mirror would also go in the "bedroom." A House Corner with kitchen and bedroom is more realistic and home-like than one large area would be. Two rooms also make more enclosed and "cozy" spaces.

- A touch of color adds warmth and helps to make a House Corner attractive. Real or plastic plants and flowers will remind many children of their own homes. Table-cloths, doll bed mattresses, covers and pillows are simple to make from fabric remnants. Parents might be willing to help. A few photographs of children and families on the walls (at the children's eye level) might also make the House Corner more home-like.

- If there isn't a real window in your House Corner, you can make one on the wall with tape and curtains.

- One way to set the House Corner off from other areas is to put all or part of it on a platform. A piece of plywood set on cinder blocks and covered with rug scraps is an easy way to create another level. Some centers have built lofts for their House Corners. A split level house with kitchen on one level and bedroom on another is enticing to children and also not difficult to create.

- Rug scraps or an inexpensive piece of secondhand carpet can help to make all or part of the House Corner a "soft", warm place to play.

- If you don't have enough furniture, a little ingenuity can often help. The back seat of a junked car can become a lovely "couch."

(E) The House Corner should reflect the culture of the children in your class.

If the children in your center can't relate to the setting you've made, they won't use it very much. This is what happened in a classroom on the Navajo Indian Reservation. When the House Corner was arranged as a typical American kitchen, no one played there. One day when the center was being cleaned, the furniture was accidentally pushed together in a manner reminiscent of a hogan: the round windowless homes of the Navajo children. The next day children began to play in the House Corner. Suddenly they felt "at home" there. (Nancy Curry, in Play, NAEYC, p. 54.)

This example illustrates how important it is for teachers to be sensitive to the culture and lifestyles of the children in their classroom. The materials and props you put in the House Corner should also reflect what your children are accustomed to seeing at home.

II-2. Choosing and displaying materials.

It is important to give considerable thought to the materials you select for the House Corner as well as how they will be displayed. You will want to be aware of the age and particular needs of the children in your classroom, the cultural backgrounds, ways to make the House Corner non-sexist, the condition of the materials themselves and how to display them attractively so they are easy to find and to return.

(A) Ages and needs of children.

Children who are new to school may require a period of adjustment before they feel comfortable in their environment. In choosing materials for these children, you might consider limiting the variety you put out. Too much choice may be overwhelming for young children. Instead of getting actively involved in dramatic play, they may flit from one prop to another unable to make a selection. If you have a lot of House Corner clothes and props, you don't have to put everything out. Put some away and then change after a few weeks. New choices will probably revive interest in the House Corner.

Some basic props you might want to include in the House Corner at the beginning of the year are:

- dress-up clothes for men and women
- dishes and silverware
- pots, pans, cooking utensils
- dolls and doll clothes
- empty food containers
- plastic fruit
- pocketbooks
- suitcases
- keys.

Real items such as kitchen utensils, are often better than toys. They are more realistic and children like handling large pots and stirring spoons. Used kitchen utensils may be donated or purchased inexpensively in a secondhand store. The telephone company may be willing to give the

center an old phone that can no longer be repaired.

Young children often have trouble sharing and waiting for turns. One way to make it easier for children who have trouble sharing is to HAVE DUPLICATES. Put out fewer items but get two of each. If you can't afford to buy duplicates, you might share with another teacher. You could take two small pots and let her have two large ones. You could put out two serving spoons without holes and she could have the two with holes. After a few weeks, you could exchange sets. Eventually when the children can share more easily, you can put out a greater variety and fewer duplicates.

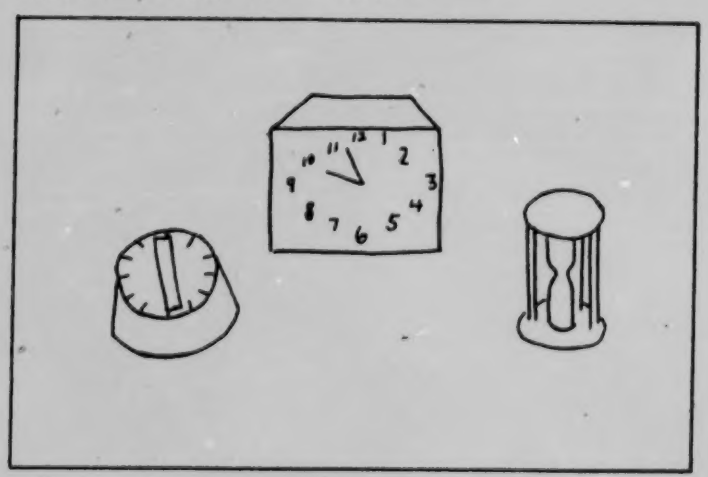
Some children find waiting for a turn very difficult. To a young child five minutes can seem as long as an hour. It sometimes helps if the children can actually see the time passing.

Here are three ways to make time more concrete:

- Children can watch the clock and tell when five minutes have gone by. The teacher would have to point out, "When the big hand gets to the 3, it will be your turn." Some children are fascinated by this.

- A kitchen timer with a bell is very good because even if the children don't watch it, the sound will tell them when the time is up.

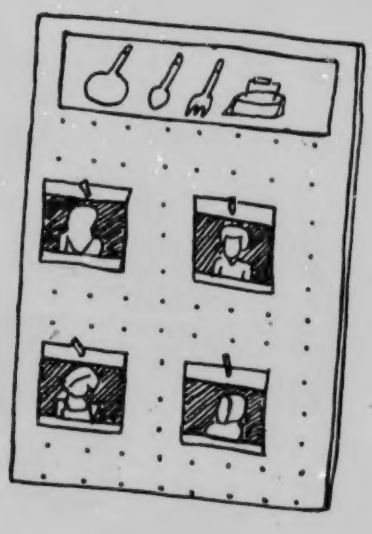
- An egg timer is fun to watch and makes it easier to wait for a turn.

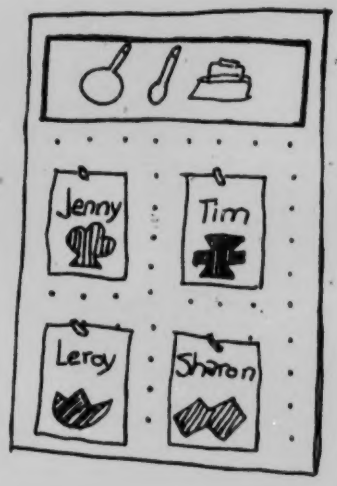


Sharing problems sometimes arise because there are too many children in the House Corner. A convenient way to limit the number of children in an area is to use planning boards. Planning boards can be made from pieces of pegboard or tri-wall put up at the entrance to each activity center. You put as many pegs on the board as there are places in that area. (If six children can work comfortably in the House Corner, the planning board for House Corner should have six pegs.)

There should be a planning board for each activity or area and all together at least as many pegs as there are children in the room. A picture of the area can be taped on the board to indicate where it goes.

Each child in the class has a personal card with a hole to go over the pegs. When the children go into an area, they hang their cards on the pegs of that planning board. Other children can see at a glance if there is more room. When children change areas, they also move their cards from one planning board to the other.





The children's personal cards become important symbols to them, building positive self-concepts. For young children you can use a photo mounted on cardboard and laminated or covered with clear Con-tact paper. Or you can print the child's name and give each child a symbol. Children quickly learn their own symbol and those of other children. The same shape can be used on the child's cubby, drinking cup, cot, etc.

Planning boards have a number of advantages.

- They set limits to how many children can be in an area at one time without the teacher having to intervene. If an area doesn't get overcrowded, there are likely to be fewer sharing problems and less fighting.

- Teachers who use planning boards find that there is less running around. Children tend to think more about where they want to work and to stay in an area longer. Children begin to plan how they will use their time.

- Free choice is not inhibited by using planning boards. The children can still decide where they want to play and can change areas when they want to -- as long as there is enough room there.

(B) Cultural backgrounds.

It is important to consider the cultural backgrounds of the children in your classroom when you select materials. Children can feel unwelcome in the House Corner when they see nothing that reflects their own culture or lifestyle. You can ask parents of your children for suggestions on how to make your House Corner seem more like their homes. Parents can help by sending empty cans from foods they eat (with the labels still on them), by telling you where to buy ethnic supplies, or possibly by donating props.

We've made lists of some items typically found in the homes of a few ethnic groups but the very best source of information for any group of children is their families. Some suggested props for an Hispanic-American House Corner:

- shawls
- mantillas
- straw hats
- paper flowers
- plastic flowers
- wooden wash tub
- photo frame
- curtains, dish towels & tablecloth (might be made from rice or flour sacks and embroidered)
- straw baskets
- tortilladora (tortilla maker, good for clay as well as real tortillas)
- pilon y machaca (mortar and pestle)
- olla (large two handled pot)
- wooden spoons
- canned goods with Spanish labels.

Some suggested props for an Oriental American House Corner:

- chopsticks
- plastic spoons
- bamboo plate
- slippers
- tea canister (empty)
- wok
- tea set
- spatula
- canned goods with Oriental labels
- strainer
- (red is the color of Chinese wedding dresses; white is only worn when mourning).

Some suggested props for House Corner emphasizing Black culture:

- Black dolls
- a TV or radio (non-working)
- hair comb
- canned goods with "soul food" labels
- pots, pans, cooking utensils
- dress-up clothes for men and women
- kerchiefs of liberation colors (black, red, green)
- photographs of liberation leaders (Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and others)
- barbecue grill
- pressure cooker
- crock pot.

(C) Non-sexist materials.

The House Corner can become a "girls only" area if teachers are not careful to include dress-up clothes for boys. If we are truly concerned and interested in widening the range of opportunities available to both men and women, we want boys and girls to feel free to try out as wide a variety of roles as possible. Even those of us who hold to more traditional views of parental roles will admit that men play an important part in family life and that boys need to have as much practice being "father", "brother", "uncle", "friend" ... as the girls need to be "mother", "sister", etc.

For boys' dress-up clothes, jackets from older children are better than adult clothes. They are big enough for the young children to feel "grown-up" in them but not so large that the sleeves get in the way. Other useful props for encouraging boys to play in the House Corner are shirts, ties, hats, lunchboxes, briefcases, etc.

(D) Condition of materials.

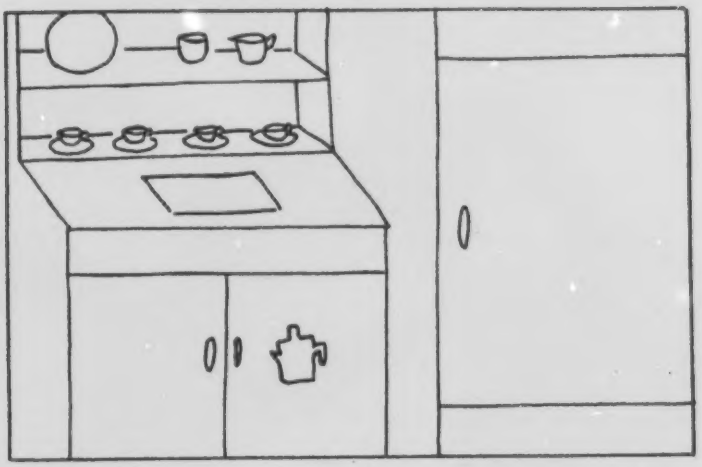
Broken toys send very negative messages to children. For one thing, they say that the teacher doesn't care enough about the children to fix the toys. For another, dolls with their innards spilling out or with missing arms or legs or even heads can be very frightening to young children. In the years from two to four, children are very worried about their bodies. That is why many young children will absolutely and vehemently insist on a band-aide for even the most minor injury. Children of this age really are not sure that all the parts of their bodies will stay where they are forever. Seeing a doll whose arm or leg falls off is not helpful to young children who are trying to deal with fears about their own bodies.

(E) Attractive and well organized displays.

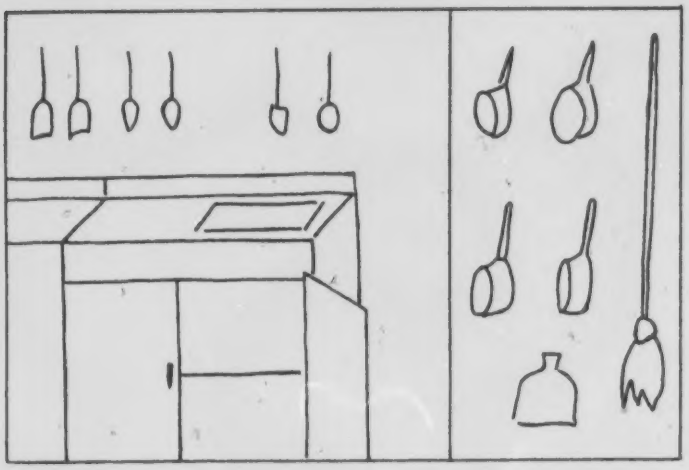
No matter how many times teachers tell children to leave the House Corner neat, if the room is messy when the children come into it, if it isn't well organized, the children will in fact be getting the message that the teachers don't really care and it's okay to be messy. One suggestion for maintaining neatness is to identify and label a place for everything. While making the labels does take time, teachers have found that children use the materials more and are able to clean-up easily on their own. Clean-up, in fact, becomes a learning activity as children have to match the real item with a picture or outline. Clean-up is fun because it's like putting a puzzle back together. You know when you've done it correctly. This can be a very satisfying feeling. When each item has a proper place, you can see at a glance if anything is missing and find it before it is lost forever. The House Corner looks neat at the end of every day and children know that whatever they want will be easily found tomorrow.

Labels for kitchen equipment (pots, plates, serving spoons, dust-pan, etc.) can be made from adhesive backed paper (for example, Con-tact paper). Trace the exact size and shape of each item onto the paper. cut it out, and place it where you want that item to go.

- For pots and pans that go inside of cabinets, you can put the label on the door.



- For eating utensils that sit out on a shelf, you can place the labels right on the spot where you want the children to put each item.



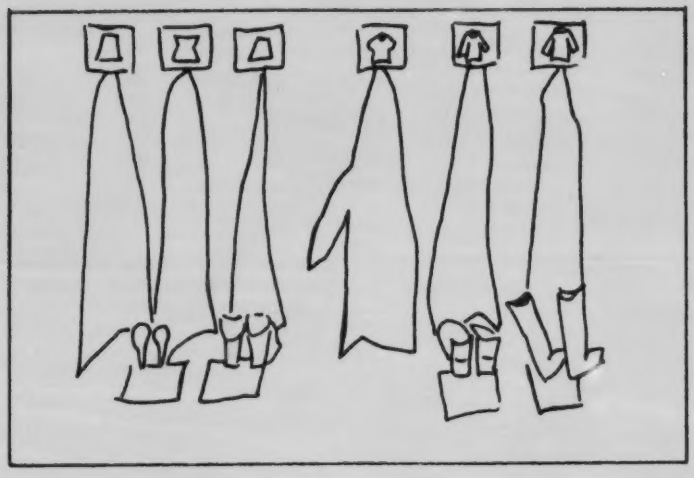
- For cooking and cleaning materials that can be hung up, you can use pegboard. Be sure to put it where

the children can reach to get things down and put them back by themselves. One idea is to tack the pegboard to the back of a shelf being used to divide the House Corner from another activity area. Paste each label on the pegboard so the item exactly covers the picture when it is hanging on its hook.

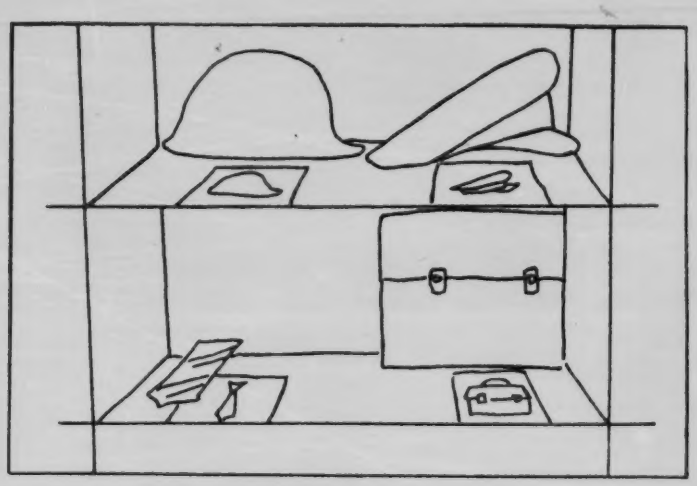
Labels made from adhesive backed paper are better than magic marker outlines because magic marker is permanent. Since you will probably want to change your display during the year, you will need to be able to remove the labels, too. Con-tact paper labels can be peeled off and moved or replaced.

To make clean-up even more of a learning activity, you can use a different color for each group of items. For example, you might use blue for all "eating utensils," yellow for all "cooking tools." Then children have a clear visual stimulus for grouping the House Corner materials by what they are for. Learning to classify is an important thinking skill.

Dress-up clothes should also be out where children can see them. Studies have shown that children use the clothes more if they don't have to rummage through boxes to find them. When the clothes are hanging where they can be seen the children spend more time actually involved in dramatic play and less time finding what they want to wear.



If you don't have a coat cubby or a clothestree, you can use pegs and pegboard or put hooks along a wall in the "bedroom" area. Hats, shoes, purses, etc., can go on the shelves of a regular bookcase. For labels, you can draw a picture of each item on a piece of cardboard. The pictures needn't be very artistic. Just as long as the children know which item goes with each picture. To make cardboard labels last, you can cover them with clear (transparent) adhesive backed paper (like Con-tact). If you use masking tape to secure the labels to the pegboard or shelf, you can remove them whenever you change the display. Store the label with the item and it will be reusable when you want to put it back out again.



CHAPTER III

OBSERVING CHILDREN AT HOUSE CORNER PLAY

Topics in this chapter:

III-1. The importance of observing children.

III-2. A framework for looking at House Corner play.

III-3. What influences a child's level of dramatic play?

Goals for this chapter:

1. to examine Sara Smilansky's six criteria for socio-dramatic play.

2. to study the levels of play ability within each of the six criteria.

3. to learn to use an observation chart to assess a child's level of play.

4. to consider why children play at different levels.

III-1. The importance of observing children.

Teachers often express an interest in knowing more about what they should expect from children playing in the House Corner. What happens in the House Corner will depend a lot on the age of the children, their past experience in dramatic play and what kinds of experiences they have had outside the classroom. To determine the level of dramatic play ability in young children, it is helpful to have a framework for looking at dramatic play and to develop some observation skills. These two topics will be covered in this chapter.

Observing children means looking carefully at what a child is doing so you can describe the child's actions. Of course, teachers are watching their children all the time, but unless they are consciously "observing", they may miss many important details of what is going on. When you observe, it helps to focus on only one child (or a small group of children) for a brief time, five or ten minutes, to know exactly what you are looking for, and to take notes on the actions and language.

If you look closely at what is happening in the House Corner, you will probably see many differences in the way individual children play. Sometimes there are three or four "mothers" all using the House Corner, but not playing together. With another group of children there will be quite a bit of discussion at the beginning of playtime because each one wants to be the "mother" but they agree that only one child can have that role.

Another difference you may see is that some children can pick up a block or any handy object and pretend it is a telephone or a hamburger. Others are lost if there are no realistic looking props. While you will see such differences within any age group, they will be even more obvious if you visit a class of two- or three-year-olds and then one of five-year-olds.

Children go through stages in developing dramatic play skills just as they do in other areas of learning. Of course, individual children develop at different rates. Each stage is not rigidly connected to a certain chronological age, but age combined with experience are important factors in determining a child's level of fantasy play.

III-2. A framework for looking at House Corner play.

Sara Smilansky, an Israeli psychologist who has conducted research on the socio-dramatic play of young children, found six important

areas to look at when observing children's role playing skills. Her six criteria can serve as a framework for looking at House Corner play.

Smilansky's six criteria are:

(1) Role play - What roles the child chooses and how they are played.

(2) Using props - What props are chosen and how they are used.

(3) Make believe - The complexity of the themes.

(4) Time - The length of time the child stays involved in play.

(5) Interaction - The child plays with other children.

(6) Verbal communication - The child uses language in playing a role.

On the next two pages you will find a chart that summarizes what you might expect from children at different levels of play in each of these six areas. A blank copy of the same chart can be used as an Observation Form which you can fill in for a particular child. (A sample of that form is included in the Appendix to the House Corner Trainer's Guide.)

We will consider each of these six ares in depth in the pages following the chart.

LEVELS OF ABILITY IN SOCIODRAMATIC PLAY
(Based on Research of Sara Smilansky)

CRITERIA	BEGINNING LEVEL	ADVANCED LEVEL
(1) Role play		
(a) roles chosen	Roles relate to child's attempts to understand and sort out who he/she is. *i.e. mommy, daddy, baby, animals*	Roles relate to child's attempts to understand and sort out the world around him/her. *i.e. fireman, policeman, doctor*
(b) how child plays role	Child imitates 1 or 2 aspects of role. *i.e. Child announces, "I'm the mommy"; rocks the baby and then leaves the House Corner.*	Child expands concept of role. *i.e. Child announces, "I'm the mommy"; and she feeds the baby, goes to a meeting, prepares dinner, reads the newspaper, goes to work, talks on the phone, etc.*
(2) Using props		
(a) type of prop needed	Child uses real object. *i.e. real phone* Child uses replica of object. *i.e. toy phone*	Child uses any object as prop. *i.e. a block for a phone* Ghild uses a pretend prop. *i.e. holds hand to ear and pretends to telephone*
(b) how child uses prop	Manipulative - child enjoys physically playing with object. *i.e. Bangs receiver of phone, dials.*	Prop is used as part of play episode. *i.e. Child calls doctor on phone because baby is sick.*
(3) Make believe	Child imitates simple actions she/he has seen adults do. *i.e. runs iron back and forth on ironing board* *holds phone receiver to ear*	Child's actions are part of a whole play episode of make-believe. *i.e. "I'm ironing this dress now so I can wear it for the party tonight. Will you call the baby-sitter?"*

(4) Time		Fleeting involvement *i.e. Child enters area, plays with a doll, puts on a hat, and leaves area.*	Child stays in area more than ten minutes. *i.e. Child really involved in play episode and carries through on theme.*
(5) Interaction	Solitary play *i.e. Child acts out role alone with no apparent awareness of others.*	Functional cooperation *i.e. Child interacts with others at various times when the need arises to share props or have a partner in play.*	Cooperative effort around a theme *Child acts out role cooperatively with others recognizing the benefits of working together.*
(6) Verbal Communication		Verbalization - centers around use of toys. *i.e. "Bring me that phone." "I had the carriage first!"*	Dialogue about play theme - constant chatter around roles children are playing. *i.e. restaurant scene* *"What do you want to eat?" "Do you have hamburgers?" "Yup. We have hamburgers, french fries and cokes."*

(1) Role play: The child plays at being someone or something other than his or her real self.

(a) What roles do children choose at different stages?

Toddlers will do a brief imitation of the action or words of a particular role. With three-year-olds, family roles are especially common. They also play animals a lot. Fours, especially boys, are trying to deal with their aggressive behaviors and so we tend to see a lot of monster play. They still play family roles too but they are beginning to explore other community worker's jobs. By the time they are five, children who have had a lot of House Corner experience are likely to play non-family roles such as fireman, policeman, doctor.

(b) How does the child play the role?

The real difference is in how many different aspects of a role children play. Toddlers usually give a straightforward imitation of one or two actions associated with the role. Three-year-olds get very involved in the character they are playing because the line between real and pretend is not clear for them. They "become" the doctor rather than than just playing at it. The three-year-old in the House Corner commonly acts out everyday family happenings -- often cooking and feeding.

By four many children can distinguish between real and pretend. They like to have a lot of external symbols for the role: dress-up clothes, jewelry. They exaggerate the way they walk and talk to show their ideas about the role they are playing. Five-year-olds are often able to play completely imaginary scenes because as they will tell you, "This isn't real. It's only pretend."

(2) Using props: The child uses objects (or pretends that they are there) while playing a role.

(a) What kinds of props?

Very young children need to have props that look like what they are supposed to be. At a more advanced level, the child can make any object into a prop - a block can become a telephone or a banana or a baby's bottle. Older children who are really into dramatic play can even make-believe they have something in their hands when they really don't - like holding one hand near your mouth and another near your ear and saying you are talking on the phone.

(b) How is the prop used?

At first, children are fascinated by the object itself. They dial the phone, push the iron back and forth, climb in the doll bed, push the

doll carriage. They are exploring and manipulating the prop but they aren't role-playing with it. At a more advanced level, the prop is used as part of the play episode.

(3) Make believe about actions and situations: Very young children usually imitate just a few separate actions. Their imitations are not necessarily connected to a theme or situation. As children advance in their fantasy play, they get into more complex episodes in which the actions are connected. The children show that they understand the order of events - first you have to do this before you can do that.

(4). Time: How long does the child stay involved in one play episode? Some children flit in, play a minute and leave. They don't get really involved. On a more advanced level, the child can stick with the same role for at least ten minutes (perhaps doing many different actions in that role.)

(5) Interaction: How involved do the children get with each other when playing in the House Corner? Two-year-olds are usually playing by themselves even if there are other children near by. This is called SOLITARY PLAY. The children are often oblivious to what others are doing. Threes also play their own role but they may seem more aware of what the other children are doing. They play alongside each other without really interacting.

If one says "I'm a mommy" and another says "I'm a mommy, too", that's okay with both children as long as they don't both decide they need the same prop. This stage is called FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION. Four- and five-year-olds are usually able to engage in COOPERATIVE PLAY where the group decides on a theme, divides up the roles and plays together.

(6) Verbal communication: What do the children say? Some young children are still non-verbal. They don't talk while they play. As children get into parallel play, the dialogue in the House Corner may center around arguments or demands: "I had that first"; "Give me the phone, now"; or announcements (often to the world at large about what the child is doing: "I'm cooking now." When they get to the level of cooperative play, there is usually a lot of role-oriented conversation. The child talks with the other children as part of the role he or she is playing.

While it may seem like a chore, it is really not difficult to fill in an Observation Form. Try it once for a child who happens to be in the House Corner. The longest you have to watch at any one time is ten minutes. Keep a small note pad and pencil in your pocket so that you are ready when you have a chance. Try to record in your own short hand exactly what you see and hear, without qualifying or evaluating your observations.

For example,

> "David picks up pot, puts it down on chair. Picks up Black doll. 'Night, night.' Puts it on bed. Lisa picks up doll. D., 'No.' Pulls doll away and puts it back in bed. D. covers doll with cloth, walks away from House Corner."

Later, preferably on the same day while the observation is fresh in your mind, you can go over your notes and fill in the developmental levels on the form. You may want to watch again to verify your initial impressions of a child's or group's level of play.

To fill in section 1 on the Observation Form list the actions the child performs, e.g., puts on dress, feeds baby, irons. If the child performs few actions, put the list further to the left. For the child who seems to have a lot of ideas about the role, write the list in the right-hand part of the section.

To fill in section 2a on the Observation Form, write down what prop the child is using and what it is being used for, e.g., "apple for food" or "block as telephone" or "rope as firehose." Choose an appropriate place in the section depending on how imaginative the prop is.

To fill in section 2b on the Observation Form, put in the appropriate place, whether the prop was just being played with, or was being used as part of a role-playing theme.

Fill in section 3 from left to right depending on how involved the play theme is.

To fill in section 4, write down about how long the child plays in the House Corner at one time.

To fill in section 5, decide if the child you are watching is involved in solitary play, functional cooperation, or cooperative play.

To fill in section 6 of the Observation Form, note if the child is

- not talking at all
- requesting or demanding a prop
- announcing a role or action, or
- playing a dramatic part.

Observing children in this way should give you a pretty good picture of the level of dramatic play of the children you are watching. If you do several of these, looking at different children in your classroom, you will be able to see if there are some children who are significantly less able to engage in dramatic play than other children

and whom you might want to work with. You should also be able to see if there are some children who are ready for more advanced props and for help in going beyond home-oriented play to other themes.

When teachers use the observation form, they often find that a lot more is going on in the House Corner than they had thought. It also becomes clear that some children play on a much more advanced level than other children. This leads to two questions:

"What influences a child's level of dramatic play?" and

"What can a teacher do to help children develop dramatic play skills?"

We'll discuss the first question now and the second will be the subject of the following chapter.

III-3. What influences a child's level of dramatic play?

There are several factors that contribute to the individual child's fantasy play including:

- real life experiences
- parental involvement
- parental/cultural attitudes
- TV
- types of toys children are given.

Young children begin dramatic play with roles that are familiar to them, drawing on their own experiences for ideas of what to do. These experiences may come from different sources. For example, almost every child has some notion of what a fire fighter does. This may come from

- seeing fire engines racing down the street.
- visiting the fire station.
- seeing a real fire.
- being involved in a real fire.
- seeing fires, fire engines and fire fighters on TV.
- talking with other people about fire fighters.

The extent and depth of individual children's experiences as well as their personal reactions will make a difference in their dramatic play. But experience by itself is not enough. In order to use what he or she has seen or heard, a person has to internalize the information - put it together and understand it in some way. This is a skill that adults can help children develop.

Children who have a high fantasy level are often those whose parents have helped them to focus on their experiences, mainly by talking with them, discussing experiences, and listening while the children talk. Parents teach their children to play by spending time with them and allowing the children to play alongside them pretending to cook or to fix the sink or whatever the adult is doing.

Parents also influence their children's dramatic play by their attitude - whether they encourage or discourage fantasy. This often depends on the parent's cultural values. Some parents react negatively when children make up stories, invent friends and fantasize situations that didn't really happen. In some cultures parents use fantasy characters - witches, bogeyman - to control the children by fear. Other families see children's flights of imagination as creative expression and take great delight in them. Parental approval or disapproval will have a deep affect on children.

Television has an influence on the dramatic play of young children. For some children, TV replaces fantasy play. They live in the imaginative world of TV vicariously and have no need to create play situations themselves. That is too bad because the children don't develop their own ideas, their own creativity, their own thinking skills.

Much of the "action heroes" play that teachers see in centers is a direct imitation of what children see on television. It is often not real dramatic play. The children simply act wild, running and jumping, and repeating phrases from television. These characters: Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Wonderwoman, the Bionic Man and Bionic Woman, etc. are very important to young children because they represent tremendous power - more power than real life grown-ups have. They can do anything, save any situation and control everything. Tremendous aggression is permitted them. But for most teachers, this type of play creates problems. It can be dangerous both to the child who wants to be "Batman" or "Wonder Woman" and to other children. Noisy, wild play - especially indoors - can be too disruptive for the class as a whole and it may be difficult to get the children to calm down after this type of play. Therefore, many teachers prohibit "action heroes" play or limit it to outdoor time. In any case, this type of physical activity should not be confused with imaginative play. In the kind of dramatic play we want to foster, the children pretend to be characters involved in a play episode. A lot of thinking and understanding goes into what the children do and say in the roles they have chosen.

For children who do regularly engage in fantasy play, television can be another source of new ideas. These children are able to take information from TV shows and use it to enrich their play. It may give them new ideas for characters, themes or actions. The difference is that they don't simply imitate what they have seen. They adopt ideas and incorporate them into their play episodes in imaginative ways.

Teachers who feel that too much TV may be inhibiting dramatic play and/or only leading to physical "action hero" imitation might want to discuss these issues with the parents and discourage excessive TV viewing.

The use that children can make of toys will also depend on how much they are already into dramatic play. As we said in the last chapter, young children often need very realistic toys. Older children can make use of less defined materials to create a variety of themes. For all children, however, teachers and parents should be aware that many of the toys sold today leave little room for the child's imagination. When the toy performs all the actions, while the child sits and watches, it is not helping the child to develop creative and imaginative play skills. When the toy is structured so that the child can only do one or two things with it, the child is not being encouraged to use it in a creative way. Children often quickly lose interest in these very fancy and expensive toys, and return to simpler ones where they can get more involved in their own ideas.

Now that we've seen how to observe what children do in the House Corner and have talked about some of the out-of-school influences on children's dramatic play, we will examine the teacher's role in supporting and extending dramatic play in the House Corner.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN THE HOUSE CORNER

Topics in this chapter:

IV-1. What is the teacher's role?

IV-2. Some research findings.

IV-3. Talking to children.

IV-4. Teaching play techniques.

Goals for this chapter:

1. to consider different approaches to improving children's skill in dramatic play.

2. to learn specific ways of teaching skills to children through direct intervention.

IV-1. What is the teacher's role?

What can the teacher do to help children develop their dramatic play skills? How active a role the teacher takes will depend on the skills and abilities of the children. For children who actively engage in fantasy play at a high level, the teacher would probably want to

- provide the space for dramatic play.
- put out a wide variety of props.
- arrange for field trips and other new experiences.
- suggest themes other than house play - by putting out new props, rearranging furniture, or giving ideas verbally.

Several possible themes are discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter we will concentrate on helping young children who are still at a low level according to the six criteria for socio-dramatic play.

Many teachers ask how active a role a teacher should take in House Corner play? Can role-playing skills actually be taught? Should the teacher get really involved in House Corner play?

Some teachers do not feel comfortable playing with the children in the House Corner. They try to help the children in other ways; for example, by

- taking the children on field trips.
- discussing the new experiences both before and after they take place.
- introducing new props with a discussion during circle time.
- reading books about different people.

While these are all useful ideas and some children may carry them over into the House Corner, research has shown that information given outside the House Corner is not, by itself, helpful to children who are not already skillful at dramatic play.

For children at a low level of dramatic play, the teacher can help by taking an active part in the House Corner, giving suggestions and modeling roles. Dramatic play skills can be taught!

IV-2. Some research findings.

Sara Smilansky conducted an interesting study with children who had poor skills in dramatic play. The children were divided into three groups. With the first group, the teachers tested the idea that the children lacked ideas and information and needed enriched first-hand experiences on which to base their play. Teachers picked two themes, the grocery store and the health clinic and took the children on visits, talked about these places, read books and had the children draw pictures. They put appropriate props in the House Corner and suggested that the children play out these themes. The children's play changed very little.

With the second group of children, the teachers tested the idea that the children had had experiences but didn't know how to play. For these children, teachers didn't provide firsthand experiences outside of the House Corner. They observed the children to see which elements of play needed to be worked on and then actually taught the needed skills by making suggestions about play episodes, asking questions and actually taking part in the House Corner play.

The third group of children received a combination of the experiences of the first group and the direct teaching of the second group. The second and the third groups both advanced about the same amount. The first group didn't change at all.

This study shows that giving information and taking trips is not as important as teaching children how to play, and that it is possible to teach children House Corner skills. How does a teacher do this? There are two ways for the teacher to interact with children who are in the House Corner.

IV-3. Talking to children.

In the first technique, the teacher does not pretend to be someone else; but, as an interested adult, offers suggestions, talks to the children and asks questions. Here are some examples:

- A teacher who sees a child pushing a doll in the carriage might say,
  - "Are you taking your baby shopping?"
  - "What are you going to buy?"
  - "Did you bring your pocketbook? You'll need money at the store, won't you?"

- A child is standing by the stove and the teacher asks,

  - "What are you cooking? Is that breakfast?"
  - "What do you usually have for breakfast?"
  - "Are you going to set the table and eat with anyone?"

  (The actual conversation, of course, would depend on the child's responses. Listening to children in the House Corner can give teachers a good idea of what children think and how they see the world around them.)

- A teacher wants to encourage two children to play together. One child is holding a doll. The other is by the stove. The teacher might say,

  - "How is your baby today? Is she hungry?"
  - "Shall we ask Robbie if he can make some food so you can feed your baby?"

A question or comment at the right moment in the children's play can help the children by

- encouraging language development - giving vocabulary, making concepts meaningful because they are taught in context.
- focusing the children's attention on some particular aspect of the role or the situation.
- expanding the children's knowledge of what different people do or how something is done.
- giving the child an idea to extend the role playing situation longer, to make the theme more complex, to include more actions for the role being played.

Because the adult remains the teacher, however, he or she is an outsider in the play theme. The children may not be as responsive to such outside intervention as they are when the teacher is a participant in the play theme.

IV-4. Teaching play techniques.

This is the second suggested technique teachers can use to help children in the House Corner. The teacher can take on a role and participate in the play through this role. It is necessary to arrange to be in the House Corner for a while - to have someone else handle the rest of the room.

What can the teacher do? The teacher can sit at the House Corner kitchen table chatting with the children as they come and go. She/he could spend a lot of time "talking on the telephone". This can be a very effective technique for involving children, for verbalizing what the children are doing, and it can serve as an excuse to go on sitting there and yet be somewhat removed from the action. The teacher can continually pick up on what each child is doing - to give the child information, to include the child more deeply in a play theme, or to help the child with ideas of what to do next. Here are some examples.

- To a boy holding a toy coffee pot, the teacher could say,

  - "Put the coffee on the stove to get hot. I don't want any cold coffee."

  This involves the child in the play theme, tells him that the stove is for heating food and that coffee is served hot, and suggests an action for him to do.

- When a boy starts to leave the House Corner, the teacher might say,

  - "Where's David going?"

  This may stop the child from just wandering away. It would make him feel included again. The child might respond: "I'm going to the store." Picking up on this, the teacher could give David a few ideas.

  - "David, have you got your money?"

  - "Hey, bring me some milk back, will you?"

  The child was thus free to go, but also had a good reason for coming back.

- Pretending to talk to a friend on the phone can be a very useful technique. The teacher can explain what the children are doing.

  - "Yes, we're pretty busy here. Raymond is cooking. Hey, Raymond, Minnie wants to know what you are cooking."

  At the beginning level of play the child's actions at the stove may not have been purposeful. By verbalizing, the teacher helps the child to focus on what he is doing and makes him think in order to answer her question.

- Teachers can encourage children to use props to make them a part of the play episode. For example, to a girl holding a doll, the teacher might say,

  - "Oh, is your baby sick?"

  - "Did you call the doctor? Here, let's get the doctor on the phone."

  The child is thus involved in the role of parent and in a play episode.

- If the teacher always treats the dolls as if they were babies, she can teach children how real babies must be handled.

  - "Take the baby off the table. He might fall and hurt himself."

  - "Be careful feeding the baby - be sure she doesn't choke."

  - "Would you put the baby to bed? Be sure to put the cover on so she won't catch cold."

  By assuming that the children aren't just children holding dolls, but are role-playing parents with babies, the teacher is helping the children get into socio-dramatic roles.

Teachers who have used this technique say it is great fun and a very successful way of teaching children. For some adults, actually getting

into the House Corner and speaking as if they were a part of the play theme and not "the teacher" is a new idea. They express concerns, such as,

- I won't feel comfortable.
- How do you leave when you are needed elsewhere?
- What kind of language do I use?

As with any new experience, it may take some time before you feel comfortable about role-playing. You should choose a role you will enjoy playing. For example, many adults would feel silly being a crying baby or a dog. If you do, then choose an adult role. You could be a "neighbor" or a "friend."

With regard to language use, it is essential to remember that young children are imitating their own families, communities, and life-styles. In Chapter II, we emphasized the importance of considering the children's cultural background in setting up the space and choosing props. It is equally important to allow the children to use the behavior and language of their home environment in the House Corner.

Where it is natural and appropriate, a teacher can use Black English in the House Corner. Part of what the children are working out in the House Corner is their self-concept. Accepting their language and using it with them is one way of telling them that they, their families and their culture are valued. Teachers who want their children to also learn Standard English will find plenty of time and opportunity outside of the House Corner to model other language patterns.

It is unlikely that you will be able to remain in the House Corner for the entire play period. There are several ways you can leave the House Corner without disrupting the play. Once the children are involved, you can announce that you have to leave for a while:

> "I have to go to the store now. I'll be back in five minutes."

This gives you time to check up on other children and come back to the House Corner later. You will find that you can leave for longer and longer periods of time and the children will be able to sustain their play without you.

CHAPTER V

EXPANDING PLAY TO OTHER THEMES

Topics in this chapter:

V-1. Why introduce other themes.

V-2. When to introduce other themes.

V-3. How to introduce other themes.

V-4. Settings and props for specific themes.

Goals for this chapter:

1. to consider the value of extending play beyond family situations.

2. to consider appropriate times to introduce new themes.

3. to learn some specific ways of introducing new ideas and themes into the House Corner.

V-1. Why introduce other themes?

There can be many reasons for extending House Corner play to non-family themes. The children may be bored with the House Corner as it is. They may be avoiding it as a play area or may be misusing it - acting wildly and abusing the props. Both avoidance and misuse can be signs that the children are bored and need new ideas and materials.

The children may start to play other roles themselves and you will want to enrich their play with appropriate props and settings. Even if the children haven't begun to go beyond family roles, you may feel that they are ready to. Socio-dramatic play on other themes can:

- provide information about roles outside the family and a chance to try out some of them.
- help build an understanding of the world around the family or of the community the children live in.
- help the children understand what their parents do at work.
- give children opportunities to play cooperatively, encourage them to verbalize and talk to each other.

V-2. When to introduce other themes.

New ideas can be introduced gradually by adding a few props such as hats and props that are suggestive of specific roles - bus driver, train engineer, construction worker.

In many classrooms, children move from the family to "hospital, clinic, doctor" play by themselves. If the children are still using the home-like House Corner setting, it can be left as is and props added to it. One very good idea is a "Prop Box" as suggested by Judith Bender in an article called, "Have You Ever Thought of a Prop Box", Young Children, volume 26, number 3, January, 1971, pages 164 to 168. The teacher gathers several articles that are relevant to a role or theme, like doctor/clinic, and keeps them all together in one labelled box. With this system it is possible to be ready for several themes without using up much space or having to hunt for different articles at the last minute.

Another good time to introduce new themes is right after a field trip. When children come back from an experience like going to a farm or the zoo or supermarket, their interest will be high. Talking about what you saw and did and introducing a few new and relevent props may inspire children to replay the experience and reinforce what they learned.

As the year progresses, it would be a good idea to make changes in the House Corner even if you don't completely rearrange it for different themes. Some of the dress-up clothes could be changed to reflect the season, for example, wool hats, scarves and mittens for winter time. More interesting and varied cooking utensils can be added to the kitchen.

If you would like to plan a sequential curriculum for the House Corner, it would be logical to go from family play to nearby community places. The supermarket is a good theme to start with because all the children will be familiar with it. After that, the beauty parlor, shoestore, laundromat, gas station/garage may be good choices. The themes you work with will depend at least partly on where your children live. The community experiences of city children will be different from those of suburban or rural children. You could talk about this with the children and let them help to decide on themes for the dramatic play area.

How long to continue with a particular theme will depend more on the children's interest than on a rigid timetable. One to three weeks is usually a reasonable amount of time.

Teachers also find that while children enjoy playing other roles, they still need a chance to play house sometimes. You do not want to abandon the House Corner totally. If you have removed the original furniture for a period of time, you may find that when you bring it back, you will spark renewed interest in family role-playing. You will also probably see more complex house play than was evident before the children got into other themes.

V-3. How to introduce other themes.

Introducing a new theme can involve:

- a trip.
- rearranging at least part of the classroom.
- new props.

For city children at least, trips within the community are usually easy to arrange. If you plan to visit places within walking distance of the center, you can avoid the expense of transportation. Shopkeepers in the community are usually willing to cooperate. Be sure to make arrangements with them before you take the children. It is especially fun for children to visit their parents at work. If a parent works in a neighborhood store, this might be a good choice for a trip.

To continue the theme after the trip, you can rearrange the furniture to resemble the place you have just visited. This can be in addition to the House Corner if you have enough space or in place of the House Corner if you need to use that area and furniture.

Furniture and props for special themes can be

- discarded items
- free supplies from the stores themselves - they may have display items they are willing to give away
- homemade or cardboard boxes and other recycled materials.

Durability does not have to be a key factor if you only plan to have the theme for a few weeks; though cardboard props and furniture can last a long time and be reused as something else in a different theme. (For example, a prop that was made as a shoe-shine box for the shoestore became the "brake and accelerator" for a car when the children were playing gas station mechanic.)

When introducing a new theme, teachers may want to think about the fact that new props can be very exciting. You may be putting out several new theme items at one time. It helps if you talk about what is available at discussion time. You will probably need to limit the number of children who can play in the new area. It might help to have another exciting activity available such as a new art project for those who have to wait for their turn at dramatic play. For some children who get keyed up from the excitement, you may want to have a soothing activity such as water play to offer.

Props do not have to be elaborate. They need only suggest their function to the children.

When starting a new theme, it may be necessary for the teacher to spend some time in the dramatic play area role-modeling and serving as a catalyst for play episodes, as explained in the last chapter. That way the teacher can demonstrate the new props and what they are used for. After an adult has participated in the play for a day, the children are able to carry on by themselves.

V-4. Settings and props for specific themes.

Here are several special themes you might want to try and some suggestions for materials to use in each theme.

1. Supermarket

Children in the House Corner often go shopping for food and the supermarket theme evolves quite naturally. To set up a supermarket you can use:

- tables or crates to create aisles
- shopping baskets made from cartons with a string to pull it or a dowel to push it
- signs for different sections - MEAT, DIARY, FRUITS and VEGETABLES (signs should be in two languages in bi-lingual centers)
- plastic fruits and vegetables
- empty cans and containers of food
- cash register - can be made from a cardboard box
- paper or plastic money.

2. Laundromat

Clothes in the House Corner get "dirty" and will need to be washed, dried and ironed. A laundromat is another good outgrowth of the family themes. Be sure to set up some chairs so that children can rest and talk while the laundry is in the machines! Other furniture and accessories can be made.

- a large cardboard carton can become a washing machine with a "door" cut out in front for loading the clothes. "Dials" can be drawn on or knobs which really turn can be put on the carton. ("Tinker toy" wheels make good knobs.)
- a "dryer" can be made from another carton
- a table to fold clothes on
- ironing board and iron from the House Corner

- clothes to wash
- laundry baskets
- empty detergent boxes and scoops
- a clothesline and clothespins.

3. Shoestore

The shoestore is a good theme that really supports interactive play; you can't sell shoes to yourself! It is also a good way to teach skills and concepts:

"These shoes are too small."

"I want blue shoes."

"You gave me two left shoes."

Props for a shoestore can be quite simple.

- chairs to sit on
- shoes - men's and women's, boys and girls
- shoe boxes
- a shoe shine kit with clear polish and rags
- a box with a shoe shaped wedge cut out of wood
- a ruler or yardstick to measure feet
- a cash register and money.

4. Barber Shop/Hairdresser

Many haircut shops serve both men and women so why not combine them in your classroom? You can set up tables and chairs and include props such as the following:

- combs, brushes
- empty shampoo bottles and hair spray bottles
- curlers, pins

- hand and table mirrors
- hat style hair dryer with tube but without electric cord
- electric razor without cord or hand razor without blade and shaving cream
- towels
- basins.

5. Garage

You can set up a woodworking bench as the repair shop and get old engine parts for children to take apart and put together. A few tools and some rags will help children play mechanic. (You will want to check for sharp parts first and perhaps clean some of the objects before setting them out.) You can also:

- make "cars" to drive out of cardboard boxes and add features like real license plates, real steering wheels, knobs and dials to turn.
- make cars by mounting a real steering wheel on a plastic milk box (from a dairy) and arrange chairs behind it for the driver and passengers.
- create a gas pump from a box with a hose attached.
- use a shoe box, four empty juice cans, and a wooden stick to make a car engine. Cut holes in the carton just large enough for each juice can and for the stick. The juice cans move up and down like the pistons in the engine. The stick is for checking the oil. You can put this "engine" in front of the carton that has the steering wheel on it.
- create traffic signs from cardboard and wooden dowels.

6. The Community

If you have done several special themes about neighborhood places, you may want, at some time later in the year, to turn the whole room into a community for a few days or a week. You can make this a geography and mapping experience by arranging the stores as they are in the children's neighborhood. You can put up signs for the streets and use the shelves to divide the room into different "places". The Book Corner can become the local library. The Science Area could be a pet store or plant store. The Art Area could be a flower shop selling paper flowers. You can even have a movie theater with tickets and real movies or filmstrips by setting up a curtain with chairs behind it and using a screen or the wall to show the pictures on.

7. Outer Space

For themes outside of the community, you can follow up on trips you take or get clues from the children about what excites them. One idea that interests many young children today is space travel. Some ideas for arranging a place and materials for this theme are:

- make a rocket from several cartons piled on top of each other. The bottom one should be big enough to hold two children. Cut a door in the bottom carton so the children can get in and out. Put knobs inside; also pictures of space scenes.
- space costumes such as helmets with plastic visors that come down or make paper helmets. The hose from the hair dryer can become an oxygen tube. Overalls with straps can be space suits.
- decorate the play area with pictures of stars, the moon, the planets, with satellite pictures of earth as seen from outer space.
- the "car" from the garage theme can become a "moon buggy".
- a telescope can be made from an empty paper towel roll.

You'll probably think of lots of other ingenious props. Enlist parents, the children, a local senior citizens group and other neighbors in finding or making what you need.

In this chapter we have considered ways of expanding and varying House Corner play. Through your observations you will get more ideas from the children themselves. While they are in the House Corner or at other times, e.g., snack time, circle discussion time, you may hear them expressing interests or concerns which could be developed for a new theme of dramatic play. By involving yourself in their play, you may find exciting new directions for growth.

If you are interested in more theoretical background as well as practical suggestions, the following Annotated Bibliography may be helpful.

APPENDICES

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR HOUSE CORNER

This Annotated Bibliography was excerpted from Resource Materials for the Creative Curriculum, by Deborah Frisby, Creative Associates.

Entries are divided into BOOKS, ARTICLES, and BOOKS FOR CHILDREN. BOOKS and ARTICLES refer to material for adults. ERIC papers, monographs, and conference reports are listed together under a separate entry.

With each entry, there is a brief annotation (a description of the content of the book or article), an evaluative comment, and an indication as to which group or groups (parents, teachers, and trainers) the item would probably interest. These are abbreviated "P" for parents, "T" for teachers, and "Tr" for teacher trainers. For each topic there is a section on books that could be read to or by the children to give them more ideas for play in that area of the classroom.

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Books

CURRY, NANCY E., and ARNAUD, SARA, ed. Play: The Child Strives toward Self-Realization. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1971.

The following are reports in Play which deal specifically with dramatic play:

1. Arnaud, Sara. "Introduction: Polish for Play's Tarnished Reputation." Sets framework for volume by delineating uses of play and discussing developmental aspects of dramatic play.

2. Brown, Nancy S., Curry, Nancy E., and Tittnich, Ethel. "How Groups of Children Deal with Common Stress Through Play." Illustrates the impact that a traumatic event can have on children and conveys to adults a way to help children cope with such experiences.

3. Curry, Nancy E. "Considerations of Current Basic Issues on Play." Summarizes basic issues addressed at Play conferences and points of view expressed.

4. Smilansky, Sara. "Can Adults Facilitate Play in Children?: Theoretical and Practical Considerations." Defines and discusses socio-dramatic play and adults' role in providing for socio-dramatic play.

This is an excellent booklet on play; a must for people seriously interested in dramatic play and young children.

P, T, Tr

HARTLEY, RUTH E., FRANK, LAWRENCE K., and GOLDENSON, ROBERT M. Understanding Children's Play. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952: 16-98.

In these two relevant chapters, the authors delineate and illustrate functions of dramatic play. They also discuss the teacher's role in ensuring that fruitful dramatic play can occur.

Insightful examples of dramatic play are included.

P, T, Tr

HERRON, R.E., and SMITH, BRIAN SUTTON, ed. Child's Play. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971.

Relevant chapters include:

1. Rivka, Eifermann. "Social Play in Childhood."*

2. El'Konin, D. "Symbolics and its Functions in the Play of Children."

3. Levin, Harry, and Wardwell, Elinor. "The Research Uses of Doll Play."

4. Peller, Lili. "Models of Children's Play."

*Eifermann's article is of particular interest because it refutes some of Piaget's and Smilansky's findings.

The literature in these chapters is more theoretically than practically oriented; however, good background material on dramatic play is presented.

Tr

KROWN, SYLVIA and MANY, MIRIAM. Threes and Fours Go to School Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1974: 89-104.

The authors present an informal account of part of a two-year study mixing 3, 4, and 5 year old upper class Israeli children of European or Western origin with lower class Israeli children of Middle Eastern or North African origin in a nursery school setting.

The particular section on dramatic play reveals the differences in levels of dramatic play of the two groups, the progress made in level of play of the lower class group, and the role of the teacher as observer, facilitator, and developer of dramatic play in children.

This book is very insightful although its cultural bias detracts from integrity.

P, T, Tr

LOWENFELD, MARGARET. Play in Childhood. London: Victor Gollanz Ltd., 1935: 182-206.

Three forms of dramatic play are discussed - play as a reproduction of daily life, as a distortion of daily life, and as an expression of a child's hidden feelings. Play episodes are narrated.

The author successfully shows the importance of dramatic play to a child's emotional well being.

T, Tr

PIAGET, JEAN. Play, Dreams and Imitation. New York: W.W. Norton, 1962: 87-212.

The author discusses his theory of play, classifies play, and compares the symbolism in play to the symbolism in dreams.

Very technical language is used; difficult reading.

Tr

PULASKI, MARY ANN. Understanding Piaget, An Introduction to Children's Cognitive Development. New York: Harper & Row, 1971: 96-116.

This is a distillation of sections of Piaget's Play, Dreams and Imitation.

It is easier to read than the original Piaget, but it is still highly technical.

Tr

READ, KATHERINE H. The Nursery School, A Human Relationship Laboratory. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1971: 354-366.

The author uses illustrative examples to complement her discussion of the value of dramatic play for children. She also explores ways in which a teacher can be supportive of dramatic play.

Lucid presentation.

P, T, Tr

SINGER, JEROME, ed. The Child's World of Make Believe. New York: Academic Press, 1973.

The following are chapters that relate to imaginative play and young children.

1. Biblow, Ephriam. "Imaginative Play and the Control of Agressive Behavior."

2. Freyberg, Joan. "Increasing Imaginative Play of Urban Disadvantaged Kindergarten Children Through Systematic Training."

3. Singer, Jerome. "Theories of Play and the Origins of Imagination."

All except the last article by Singer are very technical.

Tr (except #3: P. T, Tr)

SPRUNG, BARBARA. Guide to Non-Sexist Early Childhood Education. New York: Women's Action Alliance, 1974.

The author presents helpful information on hidden sexist messages present in early childhood education. She also points out practical ways to alleviate sexism in the doll corner or housekeeping area.

A must for people striving for the non- sexist education of young children.

P, T, Tr.

HOUSE CORNER

Articles

ALMY, MILLIE. "Spontaneous Play: An Avenue for Intellectual Development." Young Children 22 (May 1967): 265-276.

The author defines two forms of play:

1. Play as activity initiated and given structure by the child's interests and imagination (spontaneous play).

2. Play as an adult-prescribed and equipment-directed activity.

The author contends that spontaneous play is ittellectually necessary. She elaborates on the implications of this view for a preschool curriculum.

Tr

ARNAUD, SARA H. "Some Functions of Play in the Educative Process." Childhood Education 51 (November 1974): 72-78.

The author briefly delineates some functions of spontaneous play as it relates to the following: cognition, anxiety, egocentrism, symbolism, physical development, innovative problem solving, expression and integration of experience.

The role of the teacher in such play is briefly discussed.

Good introduction to spontaneous play and its usefulness to the child.

P, T, Tr

BENDER, JUDITH. "Have You Ever Thought of a Prop Box?" Young Children 26 (January 1971): 164-168.

A box of real things from the real world can be used to extend children's play. The author gives examples including props to aid pretend mechanics, forest rangers, beauticians, and plumbers. Some hints are also given on labelling the boxes and where to get some of the materials to make up the boxes.

A good "how-to" article.

P, T, Tr

GARVEY, CATHARINE. "Some Properties of Social Play." Merrill Palmer Quarterly 20 (July 1974): 163-180.

This observation study includes examples of elements that Garvey perceives as features of social play. The elements are the following:

1. Both parties involved have to know how to pretend.
2. The patterns of procedure have to be mutually acceptable.
3. A theme of interaction has to be identified and jointly developed.

Within the text, pages 169-174 specifically seem to illustrate elements of socio-dramatic play.

Relatively technical presentation.

Tr

GRIFFING, PENELOPE. "Socio-Dramatic Play Among Young Black Children." Theory Into Practice 13 (October 1974): 257-265.

The author presents background material on socio-dramatic play in which she reviews literature attesting to the importance of socio-damatic play (i.e., Singer, Smilansky), exploring the relationship of social class and culture in socio-dramatic play (i.e., Smilansky, Rosen, Stein), and showing that training children in socio-dramatic play techniques has positive results in affective and cognitive growth. She also discusses her research findings and broad implications of enhancing socio-dramatic play.

Excellent exposition; discussion of factors involved and of broad implications is in non-technical language. A non-condescending approach to low SES group permeates the study.

P, T, Tr

HARTSHORN, EDWINA, and BRANTLEY, JOHN C. "Effects of Dramatic Play on Classroom Problem Solving Ability." The Journal of Educational Research 66 (February 1973): 235-245.

This study investigates the effects of dramatic play on problem solving ability of second and third grade students. The implications of the study are important when considering Smilansky's observation that socio-dramatic play increases one's ability to perform well in the "school game".

Relatively non-technical presentation. Good validation of Smilansky's observations concerning socio-dramatic play and the "school game".

T, Tr

LOVINGER, SOPHIE L. "Socio-Dramatic Play and Language Development in Pre-School Disadvantaged Children." Psychology in the Schools 11 (July 1974): 313-320.

This study explores two questions in relation to children from low socio-economic status families:

1. Will the use of socio-dramatic play increase the use of language?

2. Will the use of language in fantasy play transfer to a cognitive task?

The procedure involves pre-testing of level of play, intervention in socio-dramatic play, and post-testing for level of play following intervention. Results show that the development of socio-dramatic play skills leads to greater language use and increased skill on gocnitive tasks.

This study is clearly presented; factors involved are well defined and procedure is clearly delineated.

T, Tr

MARSHALL, H., and HAHN, S.C. "Experimental Modification of Dramatic Play." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 5 (January 1967): 119-122.

The hypothesis tested in this study is that "If an adult engages in fantasy play with a child enacting topics commonly used in children's dramatic play with peers, the child will increase his dramatic play with peers". The results support the idea that adults can intervene and effectively "teach" aspects of dramatic play.

For the most part, the presentation is technical. Table 11 (number of subjects in training groups with the direction of difference in dramatic play scores) and the discussion results are lucid.

Tr

NOECKER, ALBERTINE. "A Doll Corner Upstairs." Young Children 25 (December 1969(: 102-104.

The author describes a doll corner built in a balcony style. Advantages of the arrangement and necessary rules are included.

Ideas presented could be used as a model.

T, Tr

PALEY, VIVIAN. "Is the Doll Corner a Sexist Institution?" The University of Chicago School Review 81 (August 1973): 569-576.

This article is an account by a kindergarten teacher of her informal observations regarding doll house play. Her major contention is that children, particularly girls, need the doll house corner to act out their feelings and anxieties about: 1) family life, 2) being sick, and 3) guilt and concern about the human body. It is Ms. Paley's contention that girls feel a greater need to work out their feelings in the context of the doll house corner than boys do.

This article is useful as an informal account validating the need for doll house play. It can also be used as a point of discussion as to why kindergarten boys spend so little time in the doll house corner.

P, T, Tr

RILEY, SUE SPAYTH. "Some Reflections on the Value of Children's Play." Young Children 28 (February 1973): 146-153.

Play is defined and discussed as a process or activity which is self directed, spontaneous, improvisational, creative and has value in and of itself. In discussing dramatic play, the author points out typical play themes of middle class preschoolers. She also discusses Smilansky's research.

The article, particularly pages 150-153, presents clear discussion and insights into socio-dramatic play.

P, T, Tr

ROBINSON, HELEN F. "The Decline of Play in Urban Kindergartens." Young Children 26 (August 1971): 33-41.

The main point of this article is that by observing and interacting in children's play teachers will be more able to key in on each child's needs and strengths and to structure the school scene accordingly. Specific goals for the direct intervention in the doll corner are also give.

1. Stimulate more abundant speech.
2. Stimulate more developed dramatic play.
3. Model standard syntactic speech.
4. Stimulate use of category words.
5. To clarify definitions of family roles.

Lucid illustration of teacher intervention in dramatic play; useful "how-to" model for teachers; article shows how intervention can cause play to become more developed.

P, T, Tr

ROSEN, CATHARINE E. "The Effects of Socio-Dramatic Play on Problem-Solving Behavior Among Culturally Disadvantaged Preschool Children." Child Development 45 (December 1974): 920-927.

This study arose out of two questions about Smilansky's 1968 study on socio-dramatic play in Israel. 1) "Are Smilansky's results generalizable to a different culture? 2) If so, can socio-dramatic play be harnessed to further the overall development of the disadvantaged child? (p. 320).

By a pre-test, intervention and post-test study she shows that skills can be improved.

The study is relatively non-technical in presentation; the statistical designs are comprehensible.

T, Tr

STOVER, MAYZETTE. "A Boy's Best Friend is This Doll." Grade Teacher 85 (January 1968): 70-71.

Informally written episode showing how dolls can be used in getting children to reveal feelings about themselves.

P, T, Tr

STROM, ROBERT. "Play and Family Development." The Elementary School Journal 74 (March 1974): 359-367.

The article introduces "Toy Talk", a parent-child play period. In "Toy Talk" the child picks a play theme; the mother participates in play and tries to introduce some new vocabulary words into the dramatic play. The mother also tries to "manifest certain effective behaviors" (p. 362) showing through her play acting, within the child's theme, the constructive use of power or sharing fears and anxieties, etc. These effective behaviors are later reinforced by the mother who reads stories related to the behaviors. "Toy Talk" is a way in which an adult can introduce specific concepts into a child's fantasy play.

Good article; can be viewed as the first in a series with Strom's "Observing Parent-Child Fantasy Play" since it gives a rationale for parent-child fantasy play.

P, T, Tr

STROM, ROBERT. "Observing Parent-Child Fantasy Play." Theory Into Practice 13 (October 1974): 359-368.

The author offers categories which can be used for observing parent-child fantasy play. The first set of categories represents traits that adults need to develop if they are to have meaningful fantasy play with children. The second set represents traits adults must work on reducing in themselves in order to engage in fruitful dramatic play with children.

This is an excellent article which successfully shows children's strengths and adult weaknesses in relation to the ability to participate in dramatic play. The article is useful in teaching adults how to play with children.

P, T, Tr.

HOUSE CORNER

Reports, Papers, ERIC Reproductions

BLAKE, ROBERT J. "Living Dolls and the Growth of Self." Paper presented at the CSA Convention, New York, November 1973: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 084 571.

This paper focuses on the ultra-realistic dolls that are flooding the market today. These products are viewed as detrimental since they stifle the fantasy play of children and teach inappropriate values.

The paper is informally written and could be a useful starting point for discussion.

P, T, Tr

SALVAY, BETTY. "Toward Parent and Teacher Understanding of the Importance of Play." California State University, January 1974: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 089 981

This is primarily a review of studies and papers done by Franklin, Smilansky, Freyberg, Singer and others relating to aspects of imaginative or dramatic play.

The author presents a clear overview of worke done in the field of dramatic play.

P, T, Tr

SINGER, JEROME L., and SINGER, R. "Fostering Imaginative Play in Pre-School Children - The Effects of Television Viewing and Direct Adult Modeling." Paper scheduled for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, August 1974: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 089 873, April 1974.

This study shows that if an adult watched television with a child and then discussed what they were viewing, the child could integrate his television experience into his dramatic play to a much greater extent than could a child who watched televison without an adult participant.

Very technical oriented.

Tr

HOUSE CORNER

Children's Books for Extending Socio-Dramatic Play

(Black people are included in starred books)

ALEXANDER, VERNA. I'll Protect You From the Jungle Beasts. New York: Dial Press, 1973.

BLACK, IRMA. Doctor Proctor and Mrs. Merriwether. Chicago: Albert Whitman Co., 1971.

*CALLAHAN, DOROTHY. Under Christopher's Hat. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972.

DE REGNIERS, IRMA. May I Bring a Friend? New York: Atheneum, 1974.

*GERGELY, TIBOR. Busy Day, Busy People. New York: Random House, 1973.

PATERSON, DIANE. Eat! New York: Dial, 1975.

*REAVIN, SAM. Hurray for Captain Jane. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1971.

SAVAGE, MARGARET. Bear Hunt. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

SHARMAT, MARJORIE. Mooch the Messy. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

SKORPEN, LIESEL MOAK. Mandy's Grandmother. New York: Dial Press, 1975.

WELLS, ROSEMARY. Noisy Nora. New York: Dial Press, 1973.

ZOLOTOW, CHARLOTTE. William's Doll. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

CDA COMPETENCIES BROKEN DOWN INTO OBSERVATIONS OR EXPECTED BEHAVIORS:
(a) On a Global Scale; and (b) With Specific Reference to the House Corner

A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
Research No. 1 CDA No. 1 Organize space into functional areas recognizable by the children, e.g., block building, library, dramatic play, etc.	A.1.1. There are different areas separated from each other and the rest of the room by furniture or room dividers that represent a House Corner, a Block Area, an Art Area, a Book Area, and a Table Toys Area with table(s) and toys.	A.1.1.1. The House Corner is set off so as to give the children (and the observer) a feeling of enclosure and protection. A.1.1.2. There are separate areas within the House Corner, e.g., kitchen, and bedroom. A.1.1.3. There are areas within the House Corner that are suggestive of other places (e.g., a store, doctor's office, have a multipurpose 3-sided puppet stage, etc.)
Research No. 2 CDA No. 2 Maintain a planned arrangement for furniture, equipment and materials, and for large and small motor skills learning, and for play materials that is understandable to the children.	A.2.1. There is appropriate furniture arranged to reflect the separation into activity areas. (Observables: tables not too high, table near Art Area, comfortable place to read near books, tricycles are kept outdoors or in large muscle area.)	A.2.1.1. All items connected with eating and cooking are together. A.2.1.2. All items connected with sleeping and dressing are together.

CDA COMPETENCIES BROKEN DOWN INTO OBSERVATIONS OR EXPECTED BEHAVIORS:
(a) On a Global Scale; and (b) With Specific Reference to the House Corner

A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	A.2.2. Equipment and materials that belong together are near each other. (Observables: pegs are near pegboard, block accessories such as cars and animals are near blocks, etc.)	A.2.2.1. Pots and pans are near the stove. A.2.2.2. Dress-up material is in the bedroom area, near a mirror. A.2.2.3. Props for active fantasy play are outside or in large muscle area. (e.g., Superman clothes, etc.)
	A.2.3. The equipment is accessible to the children. The child doesn't need the teacher's help to get at equipment. (Observables: Materials are not up too high, materials are on open shelves, materials are not crowded on shelves, etc.)	A.2.3.1. Clothes are kept neatly either on shelves or in boxes that are labelled or in drawers that are labelled. A.2.3.2. Each piece of cleaning equipment has a specific place that is clearly labelled. A.2.3.3. Cooking utensils and eating utensils either hang up or sit on shelves and the place for each item is clearly labelled.

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	A.2.4. The furniture and equipment is in good repair.	A.2.4.1. The House Corner is neat and the equipment is clean. A.2.4.2. The dress-up clothes are not tattered or dirty. A.2.4.3. The equipment (e.g., cups and saucers are very durable, not breakable plastic). A.2.4.4. The cleaning equipment is not broken (e.g. broom handles). A.2.4.5. There is nothing that seems dangerous (if broken) or that could be accidentally eaten by children in that age group.
Research No. 3 CDA No. 4 Arrange the setting to allow for active movement as well as quiet engagement.	A.3.1. There is enough space in the more active areas (e.g. blocks, wood-working) so that activity does not spill over into other areas.	A.3.1.1. There is enough room for three to five children to move around in the House Corner without evidence of crowding.

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	A.3.2. The quiet areas are protected from the activity of the active and especially noisy areas (e.g. the workbench is not in the book corner, trucks from the block corner do not run into the table toys.)	A.3.2.1. The House Corner is set off to give children a sense of enclosure and protection.
	A.3.3. If there is a climber or other large muscle equipment up in the room, it is separated from quiet areas.	
Research No. 4 CDA No. 5 Establish a planned sequence of active and quiet periods, of balanced indoor and outdoor activities.	A.4.1. There is a daily schedule. A.4.2. The center or the teacher's schedule shows active and quiet activities occur sequentially and are balanced.	A.4.1.1. The House Corner is open and available for the children at some period during the day.

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	A.4.3. The center or the teacher's schedule shows indoor and outdoor activities occur sequentially and are balanced. A.4.4. There is evidence that the children understand the schedule. (e.g. Either the schedule is posted in a way the children can read (pictures) or the children can verbalize what comes next, or the children participate in planning the schedule.)	
Research No. 5 CDA No. 8 Provide for flexibility of planned arrangements of space and schedule to adjust to special circumstances and needs of a particular group of children or make use of special educational opportunities.	A.5.1. The amount of materials put out for the children's use is appropriate to the emotional and cognitive levels of the children.	A.5.1.1. The set-up, decorations, and equipment in the House Corner are appropriate to the emotional level of the children.

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	a. If children are taking initiative and are self-directed, the teacher has provided a wide variety of materials.	a. There are a number of choices of materials including equipment for non-household roles.
	b. If the children do not have self-control and evidence behavior problems, the teacher has limited the number of choices and has provided duplicates and has simplified the room and its wall decorations so as to avoid distractions.	b. The decoration of the House Corner is simplified. The teacher includes materials that lend themselves to beginning play themes, i.e., water, suitcases, hats, dress-ups.
	A.5.2. The amount and type of equipment in the room changes over the year as the children mature emotionally and cognitively.	A.5.2.1. The teacher introduces new materials into the House Corner as the year goes on. A.5.2.2. The teacher encourages new themes of interest, e.g. garage, beauty parlor, shoe store, grocery. A.5.2.3. The teacher changes the dress-up clothes as the seasons change so that clothes are appropriate at every time of the year.

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	A.5.3. The equipment is relevant to the age group of the children. (Observables: puzzles with few pieces or individual pieces with knobs for 2's but puzzles with more pieces for 4-5's; large stringing beads for 2-3's, small stringing beads for 4-5's.)	A.5.3.1. The equipment in the House Corner is relevant to the age group of the children. (Observables: basic household articles with duplicates for beginners; a greater number of choices and themes for older children.)
	A.5.4. The room reflects the community and culture of the children.	A.5.4.1. Dolls represent the children's ethnic group. A.5.4.2. The set up of the House Corner is realistic for the children of that community. A.5.4.3. The equipment for cooking and eating is realistic for children of that community. A.5.4.4. Other materials are added which make the House Corner more realistic to children of that community (e.g. T.V. or radio.)

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	A.5.5. The teacher shows flexibility in scheduling in that she allows the children to go on with an activity when they are particularly intensely involved.	A.5.5.1. The teacher allows involved play to continue in the House Corner if it is possible to adjust the schedule. A.5.5.2. The teacher shows as much sensitivity to highly involved House Corner themes as she does to work on a highly complicated art activity. (i.e. She does not tend to allow art activities to violate schedules more than she does House Corner activities.)
	A.5.6. The room is rearranged for special occasions.	A.5.6.1. The House Corner is sometimes rearranged temporarily for other themes. A.5.6.2. The House Corner is redecorated for special holidays. A.5.6.3. House Corner equipment is sometimes moved to other parts of the room or outside (e.g. outside to set up a store on the playground.)

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A. Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
		A.5.6.4. The House Corner props or arrangement changes occasionally as follow-up from a trip or other shared experience. A.5.6.5. The House Corner is sometimes integrated into a general theme that covers different areas of the room.
	A.5.7. The teacher is responsive to children's suggestions for changing schedule or room arrangement.	A.5.7.1. The teacher is responsive to the children's suggestions for changing schedule or arrangement in the House Corner.

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B. Advancing Physical and Intellectual Competence

Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
Research no. 1 CDA no. 1	B.1.1 The materials in each activity area are familiar to the children.	B.1.1.1. The materials are items the children are familiar with (culturally relevant). (see A.5.4) B.1.1.2. The materials are realistic (often real equipment is preferable to toys). (see also A.5.1.1.b) B.1.1.3. Props in the House Corner reflect the current world and the children's experiences. (see also A.5.1.1)
	B.1.2 Each area provides enough realistic and attractive detail to enable the children to enjoy rich experiences.	B.1.2.1. The House Corner has realistic and attractive materials for specific play on differnet themes. (observables: e.g. there are dress up articles for men, there is a clothesline and clothes pins, the doll bed has a mattress, sheets, pillow, pillow cases, there are empty food boxes and cans for the kitchen which come from local stores.) B.1.2.2. There is water available in the sink and the children are allowed to use water in the pots and cups.

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Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	B.1.3 The teacher is able to carry over experiences from trips or other special occasions into learning situations.	B.1.3.1. The teacher can help the children expand their play into non-household themes, e.g. going to the clinic, going to the grocery store, etc. by taking trips, rearranging the House Corner and providing new props. B.1.3.2. The teacher provides special experiences within the House Corner e.g. cooking.
	B.1.4 The teacher can carry over an activity from one day to the next and expand a learning experience from one level to a higher one.	B.1.4.1. The teacher can build on a theme the children are interested in and can aid in its development.
	B.2.4. The teacher interacts with the children in culturally appropriate ways.	B.2.4.1. The teacher entering into House Corner play accepts roles from the children and plays roles as they would be considered in the child's community including use of the child's vernacular language when appropriate.
	B.2.5. The teacher promotes interaction among the children.	B.2.5.1. The teacher can help a child who wishes to enter into an on-going House Corner theme by suggesting a role that fits into the theme.

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Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	B.2.6 The teacher is able to use the activity the child is involved in and enrich and expand it. The teacher is able to involve the child in an expansion of his self-chosen activity. (e.g. the child on a tricycle goes to the cinema; a truck in the Block Corner becomes a construction vehicle.)	B.2.6.1. The teacher promotes interaction among children already in the House Corner by suggesting activities and expansion of roles children have already adopted. B.2.6.2. The teacher can expand from the House Corner role playing to other activities, e.g. make a cookbook, actually do cooking.)
	B.2.7 The teacher expands the children's understanding of roles of people.	B.2.7.1. The teacher picks up cues from the children while they are playing and expands ideas about the role a child has chosen. B.2.7.2. The teacher suggests a new role in the on-going social situation.
	B.3.2 The teacher can balance the number of children engaged in an activity with the amount of space and material available for that activity.	B.3.2.1. If the teacher feels the need to reduce the number of children in the House Corner, she can do it without destroying the theme of the play.

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Competency	Global Scale	House Corner
	B.3.3 The teacher can balance the amount of time she actively participates in an activity and the amount of time she allows the children to be self-directed.	B.3.3.1. The teacher is sensitive to when she is needed to support children's play and when she is not.

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